

Friday, 7 February

At the *Revue blanche* around four o'clock I find W., with whom for the first time I make up my mind to have a rather long talk. He is a tall fat fellow, soft all over, with a sickly and rather vulgar appearance. I still can see nothing in him but a reflection and he interests me less when he talks than when he listens. He professes an exaggerated admiration -for Fustel de Coulanges. "He is the only one/* he says, "who frankly loathes the Barbarians/" Useless, with W., to look for the proper tone, for he takes his from me without waiting for me to set it for him. Likable withal, unpretentious and striving more to efface himself than to dazzle, or even to be seen and to please. As a test I take him to see an extraordinary photograph of a Velazquez in Braun's window; a Velazquez in an English private collection that I had encountered only an hour before, when I had stopped some time in front of it; a very special Velazquez, in the manner of the *Christ at the Column*, entitled *The Woman with the Eggs*. The head of the woman is not what I like the most, but rather her hands, the objects in the foreground, the face of the child who has just come in to buy and receives all the sunlight in the shop. Head painted in the Zurbaran manner, without any concessions, without chiaroscuro, without semi-shadows; I mean without modulations or transitions, without any diffidence. . . . W. doesn't seem very impressed.

Saturday, 8 February

At old Papa La Perouse's. His joy to see me again. He sadly reproaches me for not having come sooner, . . . He comes out onto the stairway with me, awkwardly holds my hand tightly clasped in his, then suddenly, not able to resist any longer, makes me go back up

three steps and falls sobbing into my arms.

For not having gone to Petersburg I feel, not so much regret, as remorse. Giving yourself your word to do something ought to be no less sacred than giving your word to others.

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February

Off for Brussels, with Gerard.

Return on the 12th at six a.m. This evening, the 13th, I find it very hard to pick up this journal again. Yet I should like to continue it until Cuverville. Little habits, such as Nietzsche recommends; but mine are too short-lived* They don't lead to anything good. I have not finished Turgenyev's correspondence; I have not finished Retz's *Memoires*. . . . My time is cut up into too small bits. I am impatient to get to Cuverville. I am eager to be less disturbed.